

International Web Forum  
«Children's Right to Education: Relevance, Continuity and Innovation in a Pandemic»,  
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Contribution  
by  
H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca Eurochild President

***'We are in the greatest education emergency of our times'***, according to the global movement of diverse untied voices that work with and for children - **Save our Future**.

Save our Future continue to highlight that: ***'the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education of over 90% of the world's students. It has exacerbated already existing inequalities and magnified the global learning crisis. The future of an entire generation is at risk.***

***But while education is clearly a victim of the pandemic, it is also the solution to the longer-term recovery.'***

At European level the situation is not much different.

Eurochild is a pan-European network, that brings together about 200 organisations that work with and for children, across 35 European countries. 42 of our members have contributed to an assessment of the impact of COVID19 on children and families which resulted in a very interesting report called: **Growing up in Lockdown: The situation of children in times of COVID-19**.

Eurochild has been seriously concerned about the already escalating levels of poverty across Europe, before the pandemic.

Already before the crisis, almost 1 in 4 children was living at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

This indicator is likely to increase dramatically, as research by OECD and UNICEF, is already showing.

**The Growing Up in Lockdown: The situation of children in times of COVID-19 Report** is specifically highlighting that *school closures caused additional stress for children who missed the social contact and structure that school provides. For children already living in poverty, it meant increased hunger if they missed out on free school meals. Parents of school-age children had to home-school their children, often while, also working from home.*

*Home schooling highlighted the educational divide and the digital divide. Many parents struggle to support their children's learning, particularly those with a low level of education themselves. Most education was delivered online while schools were closed, but many low-income families are not equipped with computers, and often parents do not have the necessary technical skills. Teachers also had to adapt to delivering lessons online, and their own technical skills and the support they received varied greatly.*

These findings are also confirmed by the **OECD Report: Combatting COVID-19's effect on children**, whereby it states that *school closures, social distancing and confinement increase the risk of poor nutrition among children, their exposure to domestic violence, increase their anxiety and stress, and reduce access to vital family and care services. While widespread digitalisation mitigates the educational loss caused by school-closures,*

*however, the poorest children are least likely, to live in good home-learning environments with internet connection. Furthermore, increased unsupervised online internet use has magnified issues around sexual exploitation and cyber-bullying.*

It is therefore very clear that we need to **invest in children**. This is the only way forward if we want to ensure that not only, children's rights are safeguarded, but also to ensure that our countries, our regions and our world will develop sustainably, achieve inclusive prosperity and live in peace.

It is for these reasons that Eurochild has fully supported the *investing in children* approach, which was promoted by the 2013 European Commission Recommendation. This important recommendation was based on safeguarding children's rights and promoted a comprehensive approach to address child poverty and promote children's wellbeing. It looked at family income, children's access to services and their participation in decision-making.

Now Eurochild is supporting, the introduction of a European Child Guarantee, which was approved by the European Parliament in 2015, and upheld by the present European Commission. This Child Guarantee will hopefully be launched in Spring 2021.

Eurochild is actively contributing and highlighting the need for the **political will, political commitment and political determination together with the setting of targets**, for governments across the EU to reduce child poverty. If every EU country commits to reduce child poverty by half by 2030 we would

working towards the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Eurochild is also highlighting the need of **comprehensive national strategies** to prevent and reduce child poverty and social exclusion. Such strategies need to take a child-centred approach. This is the only way to bridge the gaps in the economy, the labour market, the welfare services, the social protection systems, family support, the healthcare services, the education system, early childhood development policies.

**It is a time where we need to be strategic, to identify the gaps and to ensure that we reach all children.**

**Not one single child should ever be left behind!**

Through the **Child Guarantee national action plans**, we are hoping to reach all children, particularly those living vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. We want to ensure that all children have access to essential services, such as education, nutrition, healthcare, childcare and adequate housing.

Eurochild is also emphasising the need for the mobilisation of **EU and national funding**.

We believe that this is the most appropriate moment for the mobilisation of the necessary funds, as recovery is on the mind of every EU government.

It is how resources are prioritised now, that we will have a long-term impact on the resilience of society and the economy to weather further shocks.

The next 7-year EU budget has these possibilities. We want to ensure there are resources put aside for tackling child poverty. Eurochild is hopeful that Member States will agree with the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Commission to put aside at least **5% from the European Social Fund Plus** in every country to address child poverty.

Eurochild is keen on this strategic funding as this will include supporting the much-investment in education.

Governments need to address the **digital divide** to ensure that all children will benefit from the potential of online learning, especially when we know that it has grown exponentially in Covid times.

Schools need to be **more inclusive** to ensure that they can support all children with different educational needs and backgrounds.

Eurochild is also part of a project run by its member – the [ICAM Network](#), i.e. **Including Children Affected by Migration**. This project aims to promote social and emotional learning in schools to provide a more welcoming and inclusive culture for children.

We undoubtedly all agree, that this is an unprecedented emergency, which is further compounded by the already existing pre COVID gaps and vulnerabilities.

Our governments are being called upon to **INVEST in CHILDREN**. It is by investing in children that our countries can effectively be re-build. It is the only way forward to ensure that our peoples can enjoy living in peaceful, equal, equitable, resilient and prosperous communities.

For this to happen, the world needs to unite.

We need to work together.

We need to involve children and acknowledgement as valued contributors.

Finally, I urge all of our governments and authorities, to reflect on what **Aristotle** once said. I will end my contribution by citing Aristotle's inspiring quote about the importance of education. He said:

***Those who educate children well are more to be honoured, than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, while those gave them art of living well.***